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PROVINCE OF ALBERTA

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REPORT

OF

COAL-MINING INDUSTRY COMMISSION

DECEMBER 23, 1919

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COAL-MINING INDUSTRY COMMISSION

DECEMBER 23, 1919

To His Honour

The Lieutenant Governor in Council:

The undersigned Commissioners appointed by Your Honour by Commission bearing date the fourth day of June in the year of Our Lord One Thousand Nine Hundred and Nineteen, in accordance with the powers contained therein beg leave to report that they have held sessions at Edmonton, Calgary, Drumheller, Wayne, Edson, Lethbridge and Blairmore, and have examined seventy-four witnesses, being, in the estimation of your Commissioners, a fair representation of all persons interested in the Coal-mining Industry, including the general public.

Your Commissioners have made inquiry into and upon all matters pertaining to or concerning the Coal-mining Industry of the Province of Alberta, and have considered various resolutions, correspondence, and exhibits, which

have been submitted bearing on the questions under investigation. All of these are herewith respectfully presented for your consideration, together with a copy of the evidence taken.

Your Commissioners herewith submit their Report, which has been made from the evidence submitted, and are of the opinion that the following matters have an important bearing on the Coal-mining Industry.

1. Extension of Markets.

Many mines only operate one half of the year or less. If more continuous operation is obtained, the result will be a reduction in the price of coal to the consumer and steadier employment to the workman.

2. Working Agreements and Method of Handling Disputes.

Provisions for making working agreements, the settling of disputes and such matters that employer and employee deal with, are not satisfactory.

3. Housing Conditions and Sanitation.

At many mines the living and housing conditions, and matters pertaining to health and sanitation, are not in a satisfactory condition.

4. Educational Facilities.

In some camps the educational facilities are inadequate.

5. Loss of Capital Investment.

Much capital expenditure has been lost on account of failure to obtain reliable information about properties and marketing conditions before operations are commenced; and also owing to lack of sufficient capital being provided to carry on operations to a successful issue.

6. Loss of Market.

A considerable loss of market has been sustained owing to—

(*a*) Cessations of work;
(*b*) Shortage of railway cars;
(*c*) Misrepresentation as to size and quality of coal.

7. Sub-leasing.

Sub-leasing of coal leases issued by the Federal Government has the effect of unnecessarily increasing the cost of coal to the consumer.

8. Freight Rates.

Existing freight rates militate against the marketing of Alberta coal in Manitoba and the United States.

9. Purchasing, Mine Equipment and Power.

Mine equipment and power, under the present system, are too expensive.

10. Conservation of Coal.

Large quantities of coal have been and are being lost through improper mining methods, as well as through cessations of work.

11. Hospitals.

In many mining camps the hospital facilities are inadequate.

As the natural resources are not vested in the Crown in the right of the Province, but in the Crown in the right of the Dominion, or in private ownership, it is difficult for your Commissioners to determine what should be done with many of the questions which have been brought before them. Your Commissioners are of the opinion that, for the best interests of the Mining Industry in this Province, steps be taken at as early a date as possible to have the natural resources vested in the Crown in the right of the Province.

Your Commissioners further submit for your consideration the following recommendations, and unanimously recommend that the same be provided for, as far as possible, by legislation at the coming session of the Legislature:

RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. (*a*) That employees be required to use every effort to see that all coal is mined properly, and free from impurities, so that the best product will be obtained from the working face.

(*b*) That employers be required to see that all coal is properly prepared and graded before shipment.

(*c*) That railway cars are properly cleaned before being loaded.

(*d*) That better facilities for more prompt dispatch of cars from the mines to the point of consumption be obtained.

(*e*) That all invoices for coal sold, either by owners or dealers, shall have inserted on them the size and kind of screen over or through which such coal passes, and the name of the mine from which the coal is supplied.

(*f*) That in order to get correct weights, better provision be made for the taring of railway cars.

(*g*) That steps be taken to establish testing stations in different Provinces, particularly in Manitoba, so that the buying public may be given information as to the uses and values of different coals.

(*h*) That a complete system of advertising Alberta coal be undertaken.

(*i*) That attention be given to the question of storage of coal by both consumer and dealer.

2. That a permanent Commission be appointed and given power by legislation to make working agreements and provide for the settlement of disputes.

3. That living and housing conditions and matters pertaining to health and sanitation be dealt with by the said Commission.

4. That the said Commission co-operate with the Department of Education with a view to seeing that satisfactory educational facilities are provided for all children of school age.

5. That before mining operations are commenced, the question of the advisability of opening a mine in any particular field, as well as the question as to the amount of capital required to open in that field, be referred to and approved by the said Commission, and that the administration of the regulation passed by Order-in-Council P.C. 2303, by the Federal Government, a copy of which is herewith attached, be vested in the said Commission.

6. That all matters pertaining to loss of market be placed under the jurisdiction of the said Commission.

the conservation of this heritage should be zealously guarded. Your Commissioners therefore recommend that you obtain authority from the Federal Government for the same Commission to be given full powers for the safe-guarding of this national asset.

11. That districts be formed, and proper hospital facilities be provided, in the various mining fields.

12. That legislation be enacted at the coming session, making provision for the appointment of a Commission which would be representative of—

(*a*) Owners;
(*b*) Workmen;
(*c*) Consuming Public;
(*d*) Provincial Government.

That such Commission, in addition to the matters above mentioned, have such authority as may be given to it from time to time by Regulation.

That such Commission also be made responsible for the proper equipment and running of mines to ensure safety.

Dated at Edmonton this twenty-third day of December, A.D. 1919.

JOHN T. STIRLING, *Chairman*.
WALTER SMITTEN.
JOHN LOUGHRAN.
W. F. McNEILL.
HARVEY SHAW.

EXTRACT from Order-in-Council P.C. 2203, dated the twenty-first day of September, A.D. 1918, being the Regulation referred to in section 5 of the Recommendations:

"The lessee shall, before opening any mine on the lands described in the lease, and before extracting any coal therefrom, submit to the

Minister plans and specifications showing in detail the manner in which it is proposed to open up, develop and operate such mine, and if the location contains more than one seam of coal, detailed information shall be furnished as to the particular seam which it is proposed to develop. No work shall be commenced for the recovery of coal, and no coal shall be extracted until such plans and specifications have been approved by the proper officer of the Department. The procedure to be adopted in opening up and operating a mine on the lands leased, as well as the particular seam of coal which shall first be operated shall at all times be in accordance with the provisions of regulations duly approved by the Minister, and failure to comply with the requirements shall render the lease subject to cancellation in the discretion of the Minister."

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